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Chair: Mr. Bowler ..... (Malawi)

Contents

Agenda item 52: Effects of atomic radiation

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 52: Effects of atomic radiation (A/70/46 and A/C.4/70/L.12)

1. **Mr. Yonekura** (Japan), Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the report of the Scientific Committee on its sixty-second session (A/70/46). The Scientific Committee did not advise on protection, policies, programmes or techniques, but rather was mandated to undertake broad assessments of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment. Exposure to ionizing radiation was constant and in most cases came from natural sources; average natural background exposure was 2.4 millisieverts per year. Exposure from artificial sources of radiation, primarily as a result of the use of ionizing radiation in medicine for diagnostic purposes, averaged 0.6 millisieverts per year and was likely to rise as more countries introduced such diagnostic tools. Other artificial sources contributed relatively less to public exposure, but certain categories of workers, including first responders in radiation emergencies, had significantly higher exposure levels. The Committee evaluated the effects of such exposure, which could have acute health effects at very high levels and cancer risks and other effects at lower levels, including heritable effects that had not yet been demonstrated in humans but remained scientifically possible. The effects of ionizing radiation on other organisms and the environment were evaluated through information on accidents and controlled field experiments. The Scientific Committee's evaluations were used by Governments and United Nations entities in issuing recommendations and developing radiation control frameworks, but policy matters were not part of its mandate.

2. The work of the Scientific Committee and its secretariat had become more demanding as a result of the expansion of the Committee's membership in 2011 and the evaluation of radiation exposure, and effects and risks with regard to the health of people and the environment, following the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station. The Committee had elected a new Bureau at its sixty-second session and had started work on its long-term strategic directions beyond 2019, which would lead to further changes to the Committee's working methods and would also inform deliberations on its future membership.

3. The 2013 report of the Scientific Committee containing detailed information on the levels and effects of exposure from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident had been translated and published in Japanese. The Committee was conducting follow-up activities to review additional information published in scientific literature, and in 2015, it had endorsed a white paper published in English and Japanese as a follow-up to the report. None of the 80 scientific publications appraised in the paper challenged the initial report's major assumptions or findings. However, some scientific topics required further analysis or research, and the Committee would continue to follow developments with a view to further updating the report at an appropriate time. The Scientific Committee had participated in outreach activities in cooperation with the Japan Science and Technology Agency, and the United Nations University. Given the positive feedback on its outreach efforts in 2014, the Committee deemed it useful to conduct similar activities in other areas where people would value objective and independent assessment.

4. The Committee had discussed two draft scientific annexes — one on updating the methodology for estimating human exposures due to radioactive discharges into the environment and the other on radiation exposures from electricity generation — and had considered an evaluation of biological effects of internal emitters. It was expected that those reports would be approved for publication in 2016. An evaluation of cancer epidemiology at low-dose-rate exposure and the collection of global data for an evaluation of medical exposures were progressing. Following the launch of an online platform to facilitate data collection on medical exposure, 45 Member States had nominated national contact points to coordinate data collection. That approach would facilitate data collection in a uniform error-free format and thereby enhance subsequent evaluation efforts. The Committee had requested the secretariat to prepare a preliminary evaluation of the results for its review at the sixty-third session, and to conduct a similar survey on occupational exposure and collect data on public exposure from natural and artificial sources of radiation.

5. Four of the projects listed in the Committee's future programme of work had been delayed because priority had been given to evaluating the radiological consequences of the Fukushima nuclear accident. Given the current work programme and capacity of the secretariat, the Committee had decided to focus in 2016 on selected evaluations of health effects and inferred risk from radiation exposure and to discuss the other three topics in 2017. Planning for commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Scientific Committee was under way; in addition, 2016 would mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident, and the fifth anniversary of the nuclear accident in Japan, entailing additional public information challenges. The secretariat was finalizing an update to the booklet "Radiation: doses, effects, risks", published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

6. The work of the Scientific Committee had been fundamental to the international radiation safety framework and to the decisions made by Governments and international bodies. By remaining within its purely scientific remit, the Scientific Committee provided added value to the global community as a cost-effective mechanism for sharing scientific knowledge and had earned respect internationally for its objectivity, independence and quality of work, all attributes that should be maintained in the future. It had also demonstrated its flexibility when conducting its focused evaluation of the consequences of the Fukushima nuclear accident, an experience that had provided valuable lessons for the Committee's working methods. The contributions made by some Member States to the general trust fund established to support the work of the Scientific Committee were appreciated, as they helped the secretariat to accelerate work and to address outreach and infrastructure. He would be grateful if the General Assembly could encourage sufficient, assured and predictable contributions.

7. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked who the Scientific Committee's clients were and why its report had been translated into Japanese only, whereas the evaluation of the Chernobyl accident had been translated into Russian. He also wished to know whether there was a mechanism for evaluating the regularity and soundness of contributions of the scientists on the Committee.

8. **Mr. Yonekura** (Japan), Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, said that the Committee's principal mandate was to report to the General Assembly; Governments and other international bodies then used the information in its reports to inform policy decisions. However, the Committee also saw its evaluations as a means of informing the general public. Its 2013 report had been translated into Japanese in order to convey the information first to the people of Japan. While there was an obvious need for the report to be translated into all the official languages of the United Nations, that had not been possible because of time and cost constraints. In general, the contributions of Committee members were evaluated based on scientific accuracy and the number of articles published on relevant topics.

9. **Mr. Crick** (Secretary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation) said that there was no rigorous system for monitoring such contributions, but the Committee did keep track of certain metrics, such as involvement in data collection from Member States; which countries contributed analyses of public, worker and medical exposures; and regular attendance at working groups and participation in discussions. The Committee discussed those indices from time to time.

General debate

10. **Mr. González Franco** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the States parties and associated States of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that MERCOSUR supported the work of the Scientific Committee, which played a fundamental role in providing the scientific rationale for the moratorium on nuclear testing. Its assessments were also the basis for essential international safety standards established under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). He welcomed the report on the Scientific Committee's most recent session (A/70/46), which attested to the importance of issues related to the effects of radiation on human beings and the environment.

11. In a world where the applications of nuclear technology continued to grow, particularly in the fields of electricity generation and health care, the Scientific Committee must continue and enhance its vital work. MERCOSUR welcomed the assessment of the consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi accident and the review of the effects of radiation exposure on children. The Committee should take those studies

further, in particular in the light of the recently finalized IAEA assessment of the accident. MERCOSUR fully supported the programme of work of the Scientific Committee, including the study of radiation exposures from electricity generation and the updated methodology for estimating human exposure from radioactive discharges into the environment. Input from the Scientific Committee was essential in areas such as energy, medicine, waste management, radiation protection and environmental protection, and its recent conclusions on attributing health effects to and inferring risks after radiation exposure should be made available to the public.

12. All States had the sovereign right to use nuclear energy peacefully, in line with international law established under the auspices of IAEA and the United Nations. The nuclear accidents that had occurred were irrefutable proof of the need for safety measures to ensure the efficient use of nuclear energy. It was therefore vital to promote universal ratification of and strict compliance with the Convention on Nuclear Safety. All States party to the Convention should continue to implement its provisions. The tragedies at Chernobyl and Fukushima were a reminder of the need for caution and for the broadest possible dissemination of data on the effects of atomic radiation, including in civil society. The MERCOSUR States parties and associated States were committed to working with the Scientific Committee to develop the international regime for protection from the effects of atomic radiation.

13. **Mr. Bylica** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union and its member States were satisfied with the outcome of the sixty-second session of the Scientific Committee. The work and assessments of the Committee played an important role in improving the international scientific understanding of exposure to ionizing radiation and its health and environmental effects and in providing essential and authoritative scientific information to the international community.

14. His delegation welcomed the Committee's intention to systematically appraise new information related to the Fukushima Daiichi accident and to update the 2013 report with current knowledge on the levels and effects of radiation exposures. The European Union also welcomed the cautious approach of the Scientific Committee in evaluating the strengths and limitations of epidemiological studies of low-dose-rate exposure and how to implement and improve them. The programme of work of the Scientific Committee was in line with the priorities of the European Union, which continued to look forward to receiving the outstanding report on radiation exposure from electricity generation that would be approved for publication at the Scientific Committee's sixty-third session.

15. **Mr. Banerjee** (India) said that his country appreciated the Scientific Committee's follow-up on the new information on the Fukushima Daiichi accident, most of which had broadly confirmed the Committee's 2013 report. He urged the secretariat to ensure speedy dissemination of the Committee's review of new scientific literature. The Committee's discussion of the two draft scientific annexes would be vital as developing countries, including India, diversified their energy generation mix — primarily with nuclear energy — to combat global warming. Initiatives for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on radiation exposure, in particular the launch of an online data collection platform, were commendable. Progress in the evaluation of epidemiological studies of low-dose-rate exposures of the public to radiation was also extremely useful. Furthermore, the commendable outreach activities, particularly in Japan, relating to the Committee's report on the effects of radiation exposure from the Fukushima accident were very important in the context of the growth of the civil nuclear energy sector in many countries. The concerns raised by that growth were addressed in the programme of work of the Committee, which India fully endorsed. The evaluation of the risk of second cancers after radiotherapy was also particularly welcome in view of the rapid growth of lifestyle diseases, particularly cancer, in developing countries.

16. As a founding member of the Scientific Committee, India had actively participated in technical discussions and had shared its position on the many subjects under consideration at the sixty-second session. He encouraged Member States to adopt the related draft resolution.

17. **Mr. Alday González** (Mexico) said that information on the impact of atomic radiation collected by the Scientific Committee had proved useful for the United Nations and other relevant organizations and Governments. As a member of the Committee, Mexico participated actively in the review of technical documents and would continue contributing to those scientific fields within the mandate of the Committee.

18. The Scientific Committee's research had strengthened the deliberations at the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Norway in 2013 and in Mexico in 2014. It had been recognized at those two events that the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons was a central concern that should be at the heart of multilateral deliberations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and on the global security agenda for the twenty-first century. Raising awareness of the devastating humanitarian and other consequences of the use of nuclear weapons had enhanced understanding of the need to eliminate risks.

19. **Mr. Mackay** (Belarus) said that the Scientific Committee had become the most authoritative international body on assessing the effects of radiation. Its work was distinguished by a high level of professionalism and the broad scope and depth of its efforts. Its scientific reports served as a valuable source of information and were used widely to develop radiation and environmental protection standards.

20. Belarus attached great importance to the Scientific Committee's work and welcomed its launch of periodic international information exchanges on radiation exposure at production sites and in medical facilities. The international community must highly value the Scientific Committee's work in assessing the radiation risks posed by electricity generation and radioactive emissions.

21. The Scientific Committee's work held particular significance for Belarus, which, over the course of three decades, had undertaken efforts to assess and recover from the effects of the Chernobyl accident. His country recalled with gratitude the Scientific Committee's participation in assessing and forecasting the medical and ecological effects of that catastrophe. Belarus had incorporated the Scientific Committee's health and environmental recommendations into its legislation and practices.

22. His country's unique recovery experience was taken into account in its national nuclear energy plan, including its development of nuclear and radiation security mechanisms and radiation control and monitoring systems. Yet that experience was not exclusive to Belarus and comprised the accumulated knowledge and methodologies of at least three countries — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — and other Governments and international organizations that had participated in the Chernobyl recovery effort.

23. That knowledge was actively shared among Member States. Experts from Japan and Belarus cooperated on analysing the consequences of radiological disasters and relevant counter-measures. It was no coincidence that Belarus, the Russian Federation and Japan had made a joint statement at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction with regard to the lessons learned from the Chernobyl experience and the prospects for preserving and disseminating those lessons.

24. In that regard, his delegation believed that it was necessary to develop, under the auspices of the United Nations, a strategic action plan on Chernobyl for the post-2016 period. As a member of the United Nations inter-agency task force on Chernobyl, the Scientific Committee must be a key participant in that work. The Scientific Committee's outreach activity could be devoted to that challenge, thus contributing to the visibility of the Committee's work and informing the broader public of the genuine risks of radiation. His delegation was interested in collaborating with the Scientific Committee on joint outreach activities to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident.

25. **Mr. Forés Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that his delegation welcomed the annual report of the Scientific Committee, whose high-quality work was used to establish international and national standards on protection from the effects of ionizing radiation. The Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a permanent reminder of the devastating effects of nuclear weapons, a scourge that still affected humankind. Since current legislation was insufficient, the adoption of an international legal agreement for the total elimination of nuclear weapons was the only means of achieving international peace and security and ensuring that such weapons were never used again.

26. Despite the difficulties caused by the illegal embargo imposed by the United States Government,

Cuba had treated thousands of child victims of the accident at Chernobyl under its humanitarian programme in Tarará. The programme had gathered primary data on internal contamination in children, which had been disseminated at scientific events, used by United Nations-affiliated agencies and quoted in the work of the Scientific Committee.

27. It was important to continue developing links between the Scientific Committee and other organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), IAEA and UNEP, since joint efforts would lead to technical progress and greater benefits for humankind in areas such as health care and environmental protection. Genuine and broad cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear energy was the only way to eliminate the potential threats of ionizing radiation.

28. **Mr. Leschenko** (Ukraine) said that his delegation commended the authoritative and independent contribution of the Scientific Committee to the international community's understanding of ionizing radiation. Given the increase in the volume, complexity and diversity of information on atomic and ionizing radiation in recent years, the Scientific Committee's work should continue and should be disseminated widely. With the availability of additional relevant scientific information since the Committee's 2013 assessment, Ukraine supported the need to follow up on assessment of the level and effects of radiation exposure from the 2011 accident at Fukushima. Ukraine was ready to put its national experience and extensive research activities to use and assist with the preparation and publication of the relevant scientific annexes.

29. The Scientific Committee had made good progress on a number of issues, including the implementation of the public information and outreach strategy for 2014-2019. His delegation looked forward to the completion of the methodology for estimating human exposure from radioactive discharges. That was of particular importance for Ukraine, owing to the need to establish sanitary zones around Ukrainian nuclear power facilities, including storage places for waste management within the 30-kilometre zone. It also looked forward to the preparation of the document on radiation exposures from electricity generation and its approval during the sixty-third session. Ukraine would use that document to develop hygiene standards in assessing the country's radiation security norms.

30. His delegation supported the four new topics proposed in the future programme of work of the Scientific Committee (A/70/46, para. 16) and noted that outreach activities played an important role in raising awareness and deepening understanding of issues related to radiation. Ukraine welcomed the decision to publish the updated UNEP booklet entitled "Radiation: doses, effects, risks". Ukraine had actively participated in drafting the Scientific Committee's future programme of work and current strategic plan for 2014-2019. Consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States should continue to be part of the process of preparing scientific reports and should be facilitated by the secretariat. Ukraine remained ready to provide the Scientific Committee with information on the levels and effects of ionizing radiation.

31. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan) said that, as a member of the Scientific Committee, Pakistan was cognizant of its important role in disseminating knowledge about the levels, effects and risks of radiation. Aware of the many potential uses and benefits of nuclear technology, and of its devastating negative side effects, nations were sensitized to the need for extreme caution as they broadened their use of nuclear energy and nuclear applications in health, agriculture, industry, research and development.

32. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, an independent regulatory body, had been established in 2001 to ensure nuclear and radiation safety and supervise all nuclear installations and radiation facilities in the country in order to contain the effects of atomic radiation. It maintained a database of occupational exposure in radiation workers, and its investigations into any cases of exposure served to improve existing safeguards. The Authority was also conducting a pilot project to assess radiation doses received by patients during cardiology and angiographic procedures. Furthermore, it was a national warning point and the competent authority designated under early notification and assistance conventions for the coordination of nuclear or radiological emergencies at the national and international levels. Pakistan, which participated regularly in emergency exercises conducted by IAEA, had an Emergency Preparedness and Review process to appraise national emergency preparedness and response capabilities. The country had registered its national assistance capabilities in the IAEA Response

and Assistance Network and welcomed the Agency's efforts to assist Member States in developing and improving preparedness and response capabilities for nuclear and radiological incidents and emergencies.

33. In order to ensure that its regulatory body had a sufficient number of skilled professionals, Pakistan had taken steps to build capacity, including the establishment of a centre of excellence for training in nuclear security, nuclear safety and regulatory matters. The regulatory body had set up protection-level calibration laboratories at three sites to strengthen the radiation protection infrastructure and technical capabilities for the safety of workers, patients and the public. It had established a national environmental radioactivity surveillance programme and initiated estimations of radon doses in dwellings, mines and workplaces, and was also assessing doses of naturally occurring radioactive materials.

34. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation appreciated the work of the Scientific Committee and the report on its sixty-second session. The Government of Argentina welcomed the Scientific Committee's estimations of the radiation levels and consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, as well as on the effects of radiation exposure on children, but underscored the preliminary nature of those findings. There was an urgent need for the Scientific Committee to continue that work in order to achieve an exhaustive understanding of those topics; in particular, it should take into account IAEA General Conference resolution GC(57)/RES/9 calling for a comprehensive report on the Fukushima Daiichi accident. It was essential for the secretariats of IAEA and the Scientific Committee to coordinate their efforts in order to ensure that the conclusions on the Fukushima Daiichi accident were consistent and coherent. His delegation was encouraged by the Committee's request for its conclusions on new scientific literature on the accident to be made available as a non-sales publication and hoped that it would be translated as soon as possible into all the official languages of the United Nations.

35. Argentina welcomed the progress on the methodology for estimating human exposure from radioactive discharges; in assessing levels of radiation exposure from electricity generation — which was an absolute priority — and the biological effects of certain internal emitters, in particular tritium and uranium, which the Committee must consider with the utmost caution; and in evaluating epidemiological studies of environmental sources of radiation at low-dose rates, which should take into account the Committee's recent conclusions on retrospective attribution of health effects to low-dose exposure and the prospective inference of risk associated with exposure.

36. Welcoming the Scientific Committee's collection of data on medical and occupational exposure to radiation, his Government had appointed a liaison officer to provide data to and work with the Committee to contribute to the initiative's success. While Argentina fully supported the programme of work of the Scientific Committee, it considered that the assessment of health effects of low-dose exposure should be fully coherent and consistent with the Committee's recent conclusions. Evaluations of the risk of second cancers and of the impact of radiation exposure from the nuclear industry on biota were equally important. Argentina was therefore concerned by the Committee's decision, outlined in paragraph 16 of the report (A/70/46), to give priority to initiating selected evaluations of health effects and inferred risk from radiation exposure.

37. His delegation took note of the recognition that voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of UNEP would be beneficial for the dissemination of the Committee's findings in official languages of the United Nations other than English. Argentina was not opposed to the suggestion in paragraph 17 of the report; it would continue to make contributions in kind, but considered that the Committee should be funded by the regular budget, without contributions to a trust fund.

38. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, while nuclear energy would remain a stable, cost-effective and clean energy source, the effects of atomic radiation and its possible harm to humanity and the environment warranted concern. It was vital for the international community to study the effects of atomic radiation in order to ensure effective protection against harmful radiation, and harness atomic radiation technology to benefit and not to harm humankind. In that regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran attached great importance to the role of the Scientific Committee in promoting wider knowledge and understanding of the level, effects and risk of atomic radiation on human beings and the environment. All Member States should commit themselves to cooperating with the Scientific Committee, which should be able to benefit from the contribution and knowledge of all countries. His

delegation welcomed any measure aimed at strengthening and enhancing the work of the Scientific Committee. An increase in its membership would allow interested countries to contribute to the work of the Committee and nothing should prevent them, particularly States with a high level of expertise and scientific potential, from joining the Scientific Committee and being represented by their most qualified scientists.

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.12: *Effects of atomic radiation*

39. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that it affirmed support for the proposed future programme of work of the Scientific Committee and recognized the Committee's contribution to knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation, as well as the research and evaluations it conducted with utmost scientific authority and independence.

40. He said that, given the importance of disseminating the findings of the Scientific Committee, the publication of the report on the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami was an important step. The visit of the Chair of the coordination group for the report and the public briefings on the report had been well received, as they had helped to alleviate worries and inform the public. Seminars and workshops during the visit, some of which had been co-organized with United Nations University and the University of Fukushima, had raised awareness of the Committee's work and its significance to the general public. Future outreach activities, including the update to the UNEP booklet, would be welcome.

41. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications and that Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Estonia, France, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States of America had become sponsors.

42. *Draft resolution* A/C.4/70/L.12 *was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.